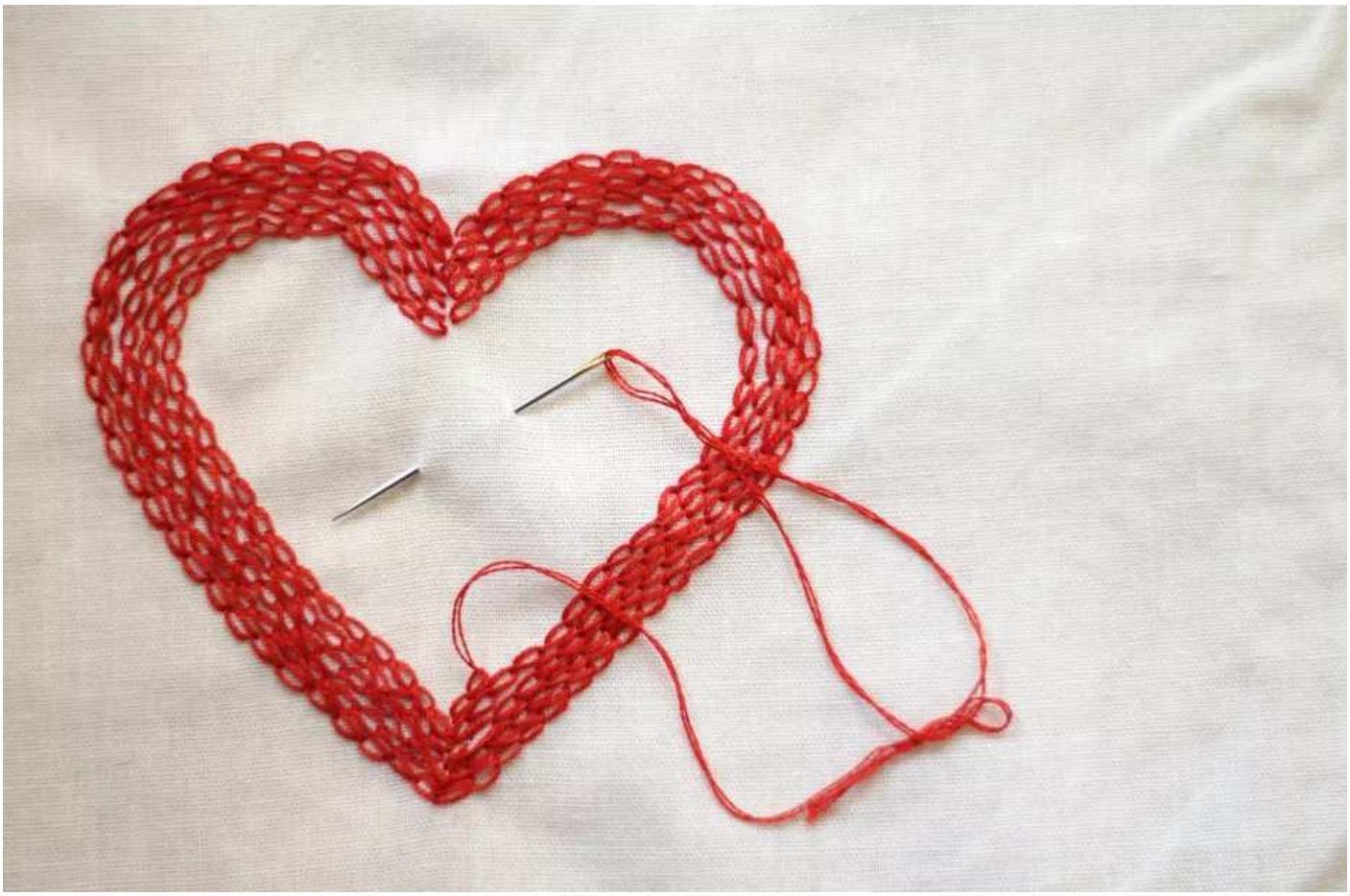
How to Do the Chain Stitch in Embroidery

An Essential Looped Stitch You'll Use Often

By CHERYL FALL | Updated on 06/29/20



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PROJECT OVERVIEW

TOTAL TIME: 1 hr

SKILL LEVEL: Beginner

The chain stitch is one of the best-known stitches in embroidery. A member of the looped stitch category, it can be stitched along a curved or straight line. As an embroiderer, you will use it or one of its many variations all of the time. Once you've mastered the basic chain stitch, try the single or detached chain, lazy

Explore using it in combination with other stitches in any of the many free designs available or one of your own.

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Notes

The two ways of working, standard chain stitch and reverse chain stitch (sometimes called broad chain stitch) are shown below. Practice on a small square of cotton or other fabric of your choice, using needles of type and size appropriate to the fabric.

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The chains of chain stitch are created by bringing the thread around the needle as you make a stitch. The loop of a stitch goes around the stitch coming after it, each anchoring the previous in place. The tutorial shows both the standard way to work chain stitches and the "reversed" method for getting the same effect.

What You'll Need

Equipment / Tools

- Embroidery hoop sized for practice cloth
- Embroidery needle, size between 1 and 5
- Small sharp scissors
- Pencil or water soluble pen
- Ruler

Materials

- Small square of cotton fabric for practicing
- Six-strand embroidery floss

Instructions

01 Getting Ready

If you are still learning to stitch, go ahead and mark your fabric with a few

Place the fabric in the hoop. Cut a 12 to 14-inch length of six-strand embroidery floss and thread it through the embroidery needle. Knot the other end.

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02 Working the Stitch as a Line

To begin, bring the needle up through the back of the fabric to the front at the beginning of the line to be worked.

- Take the needle down near the hole where the thread comes up, and bring the tip of the needle up a stitch distance away; don't pull through yet.
- Place the working thread behind the needle as shown, creating a loop; pull the needle through above the loop.

Tip

Keep the thread above the path of the line as you stitch. Doing so will set you up to more easily make your chain stitches.

As you work this stitch, pay attention to the twist and direction of the thread

Continue stitching in the same manner, spacing the stitches at regular intervals and keeping the stitches uniform in size, until you reach the end of your line. End the length by making a small anchoring straight stitch at the end of the final loop to secure.

Working the Chain Stitch

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If you run out of thread while stitching, do not end the thread by making an anchoring stitch in the final loop.

01 Take the needle down near the hole where the thread comes up, leaving thread to make the loop of the chain stitch on the surface. The loop should be similar in size or a bit larger than the existing loops.

02 The unanchored loop may twist on the surface; hold it on the surface of the fabric. Weave the tail of the first thread through the back side of the stitching on the wrong side of the fabric now.

03 Weave the new thread through the back side of the stitching on the wrong side of the fabric. Bring the needle up at the position where the next stitch should begin, taking it through the unanchored loop.

If needed, tug the tail of the first thread to reduce the size of the loop on the front side, making sure all loops are the same size. Continue working the chain stitch as usual with the new thread.

Chain Stitch Example

04 Working the Stitch as Fill

Chain stitch makes a terrific filling that works up quickly to create solid blocks of color in your embroidery. You can make the rows of stitching all go the same direction, or alternate them so they create a patterned texture. Fill your shape with horizontal, vertical, or diagonal lines, or try a spiral or oval concentric line for a completely different effect.

- To work the chain stitch as a filling, stitch multiple rows close together, spacing them so that no fabric shows between the rows.

05 Reversed Chain Stitch

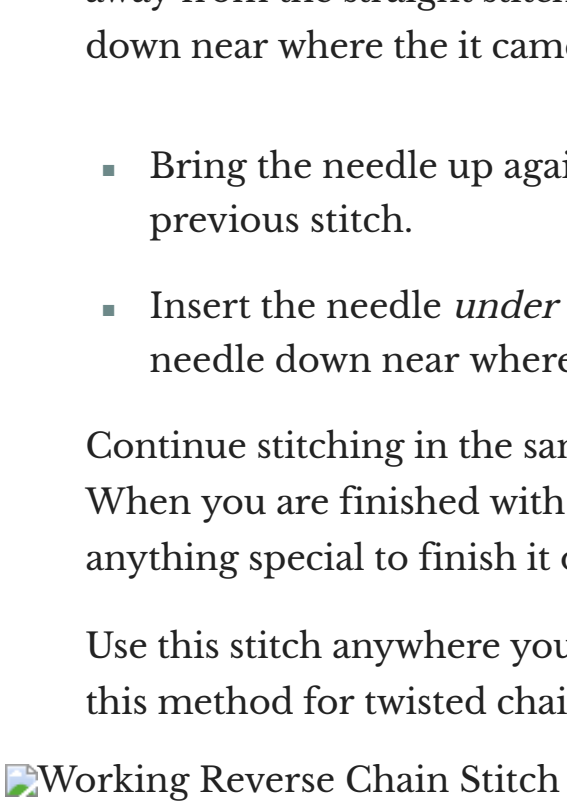
If you've ever chain stitched the standard way, you may have experienced accidentally pulling out a whole string of stitches. That will never happen with the reversed chain stitch.

straight stitch along the stitching line. Bring the needle up one stitch length away from the straight stitch, insert it *under the straight stitch*, then take it down near where the it came up.

- Bring the needle up again, one stitch length away from the end of the previous stitch.
- Insert the needle *under the loop of the previous stitch* and take the needle down near where it came up.

Continue stitching in the same manner until you reach the end of your line. When you are finished with the row of stitching, there's no need to do anything special to finish it off.

Use this stitch anywhere you would use basic chain stitch. You could also use this method for twisted chain stitch or detached chain stitch.


Working Reverse Chain Stitch

Further Ways to Experiment with Chain Stitch

When you're working the reversed chain stitch, try using two colors of thread in a single line. Thread two needles with floss and alternate colors with each new stitch.

Add an extra dimension to your chain stitching by layering it with a backstitch or running stitch. After you've worked the chain stitch, go back over it, either filling in the centers of each "link" or taking a stitch over the point where each "link" joins.

Another way to add something extra to your chain stitch is to wrap or weave a second color of thread over a line of the finished embroidery.

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